



...Those new to t'ai chi AND those wanting to continue their t'ai chi practice are WELCOME to join this community event. In each session we will focus on our breath, engage in gentle movement, learn t'ai chi basic exercises and over time explore t'ai chi postures (movements).

Basic T'ai Chi Warm Up Exercises

ALL MOVEMENTS VERY SLOW & COORDINATED WITH THE BREATH

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A PDF of handout is located at communityevents.mononaterrace.com under Health/Wellness Programs, T'ai Chi at Monona Terrace.

When people say they study t'ai chi it typically means they study a specific style handed down through family lineages, such as Yang, Wu, Chein, Sun, etc. While some of the principles are similar, the way these principles are expressed can be quite different. I study/teach Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan. It is a Yang style, hidden tradition. A new student practices breathing and a series of basic exercises prior to learning more involved taijiquan (t'ai chi) movements.

The basic exercises have both warm-up and buildup functions. They primarily enable beginning taijiquan (t'ai chi) students to coordinate breath with movement, practice the correct stance and the proper way to shift their weight while strengthening the resiliency of the waist and legs. Complete muscle relaxation plus closely coordinated breathing and movement is the beginning of gongfu – “skill developed through work over time.” In the initial stages, observe the principle of naturalness, taking care not to overdo anything. As a rule the knees (or any joint) should never be locked. When weight bearing, the knee should never be in front of your foot (keep the knee over the foot). Gradually lengthen the exercise period and slightly increase the degree of difficulty. See below for two of the basic exercises we practice at Monona Terrace rooftop t'ai chi. The descriptions are adapted from Wang Yen-nien (1988).

OPEN TAIJI

1. Strengthens the digestive organs
2. Enhances the endurance and resilience of arms & legs

• Inhale... lift both hands to shoulder height, arms extended & elbows soft (not locked); a rounded motion. Palms face the ground. Arms over the thighs.

• Exhale... bend both arms slightly and slowly lower them. Keep arms over the thighs and then move to the side of the body with the palms facing backward.

CARRY TIGER BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN

1. Invigorates the internal organs
2. Helps to circulate chi in the lower dantien (abdomen)
3. Strengthens the ability of the four limbs to coordinate

• Inhale... move hands/arms upward (arms extended & elbow soft), palms down & over the thighs (like open tai chi) until level with shoulders and shoulder width apart.

• Exhale... bend your arms slightly and let your elbows hang naturally.

• Inhale... straighten both legs (don't lock knees) and allow the arms to move upward; palms face forward and then move over the head with palm down and finger tips (of each hand) pointed toward each other.

• Exhale... the body does not move and both hands separate, descending (outward to the side) until level at the shoulders; both palms face upward.

• Inhale... bring your shoulder blades together gently and then release them.

• Exhale... bring your arms back towards the center, start turning the palms over to face the ground and move your hands downward as if scooping down to pick something up; your palms are facing each other – sinking your body as you are doing this and tail bone pushed forward. Scoop with your hands and bring your hands together with the palms facing upward. Your left hand is underneath the right. Look at your hands.

• Inhale... straighten both legs (don't lock knees). Both hands follow as the body straightens. Without changing the position of the hands, raise them to the front of the chest, level with your shoulders. Turn both palms toward the ground. With your right hand, press downward on the back of your left hand.

• Exhale... separate both hands (left and right) at the shoulder level and chest-width apart. Sink the body and lower the hands down the front of thighs and then let them hang by your sides, palms facing backward.

For more info about Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (YMT):

- International Association; <http://ymti.org/us>
- American Association; <http://aymta.org>
- Local School; <http://madisondaoguan.org>